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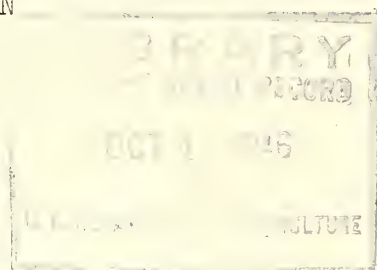


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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION  
BUREAU OF ANIMAL INDUSTRY

RAISING GUINEA PIGS 1/

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Guinea pigs are raised as pet and fancy stock and for scientific purposes. This limited outlet naturally restricts the possibility of large profits from quantity production. The institutions that require guinea pigs purchase animals that have never been used for experiments and are known to be suitable for the purpose. Fanciers producing guinea pigs are now organized in a national association known as the American Rabbit and Cavy Breeders Association. The Secretary has offices at 309 Whitfield Building, 5941 Baum Boulevard, Pittsburgh 6, Pennsylvania, and persons desiring to raise purebred guinea pigs, or cavies, as they are technically known, should write to that office for information regarding registration, shows, and disposal of stock. Rabbit journals carry advertising on sale and purchase of guinea pigs. Some of them also have a cavy department wherein current matters pertaining to the raising of these animals are discussed.

Guinea pigs may be entirely black, brown, white, or tawny, or a mixture of these colors. They may be long-haired, or short, smooth-coated or rough. The short-haired, smooth-coated varieties are in greatest demand, and from the sanitary standpoint are the most satisfactory to raise. A full-grown cavy in good flesh should weigh nearly 2 pounds at 18 months of age.

#### HOUSING

To reduce the cost of equipment and the labor in feeding and care, some producers have adopted the colony system of raising guinea pigs. Under that system, 30 to 50 mature animals are kept in one group, and sufficient pen space is provided to allow the animals ample freedom of exercise. The compound-tier hutch, however, proves more satisfactory under average conditions. The number of such hutches, or even of tiers to the hutch, depends entirely upon the number of guinea pigs to be kept.

With each compartment 30 inches deep by 36 inches long and 18 inches high, there is sufficient floor space for 4 or 5 breeding females with their litters. The one large door closing all tiers should be made of 1/2- to 3/4-inch-mesh wire netting. In a dark corner a shelf about 4 inches high should be provided for the animals. They will usually sleep on the top, and the space below is a safe retreat for the female.

## FEEDING

Guinea pigs should be fed twice daily on regular schedule and without waste. They require about the same kinds of feed as do rabbits. A mixture consisting of equal parts of oats, wheat, and barley, and a sufficient quantity of soybean meal, peanut meal, or linseed meal to form 10 percent of the total, proves satisfactory. Good-quality legume hay should be supplied freely. A salt spool and fresh water should always be available. Such green feeds as garden vegetables or lawn clippings are excellent conditioners.

## BREEDING

Well-developed females are sexually mature at 1 month of age, but they should not be bred until 5 or 6 months old. The gestation period is 63 to 70 days. Consequently, under the best of circumstances not more than 5 litters can be produced within a year. The average number of young per litter is 3, and the maximum about 6. A female in breeding prime can be expected to produce about 12 or 15 young annually.

The young are born with eyes open and are covered with hair. The mother weans them after about 3 weeks. When the young are taken from the mother, the sexes should be kept separate until mating time. A pen holding 30 to 40 is satisfactory for this purpose. It is always best to keep animals of about the same size together as the older and stronger males are likely to injure those just weaned.

From 3 to 5 females should be mated permanently with one male. The females should be so grouped as to get along among themselves agreeably. This they usually do, and frequently they nurse young animals of about the same age as their own indiscriminately. If the animals have no hereditary weakness, inbreeding for a few generations is not harmful.

## MANAGEMENT

The quarters for guinea pigs should always be kept clean and sanitary. Hutches should be cleaned regularly twice a week, oftener if necessary. This may be done without removing the animals. It is a good plan to fumigate and disinfect the hutches once or twice a year.

The general healthiness of the stock will be sustained if a uniformly moderate temperature is provided and if the animals are always kept dry.

## PERIODICALS CARRYING INFORMATION ON GUINEA PIGS

California Rabbit News, Route 2, Box 1427, Sacramento, Calif. Price \$1.00 per yr.

Small Stock Magazine, 118 So. Linden St., Lamoni, Iowa. Price \$1.00 per year.

The American Small Stock Farmer, Pearl River, N. Y. Price \$1.00 per year.